



BILLING CODE: 3410-XY-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

[Docket #: RBS-20-BUSINESS-0034]

**Notice of Solicitation of Applications for Inviting Applications for the Rural
Economic Development Loan and Grant Programs for Fiscal Year 2021**

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice is to invite applications for loans and grants under the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) Programs for fiscal year (FY) 2021, subject to the availability of funding. This notice is being issued in order to allow applicants sufficient time to leverage financing, prepare and submit their applications, and give the Agency time to process applications within FY 2021. Successful applications will be selected by the Agency for funding and subsequently awarded to the extent that funding may ultimately be made available through appropriations. An announcement on the website at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/fy2021-appropriated-funding> will identify the amount received in the appropriations. All applicants are responsible for any expenses incurred in developing their applications.

DATES: The deadline for completed applications to be received in the USDA Rural Development State Office no later than 4:30 p.m. (local time) are: First Quarter, September 30, 2020; Second Quarter, December 31, 2020; Third Quarter, March 31, 2021 and Fourth Quarter, June 30, 2021.

ADDRESSES: Applications must be submitted to the USDA Rural Development State Office for the State where the Project is located. Applications may be submitted in paper or electronic format to the appropriate Rural Development State Office and must be received by 4:30 p.m. local time on the deadline date(s). Applicants are encouraged to contact their respective State Office listed below for an email contact to submit an electronic application prior to the submission deadline date(s).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cindy Mason at (202) 690-1433, cindy.mason@usda.gov or David Chestnut at (202) 692-5233, david.chestnut@usda.gov, Program Management Division, Business Programs, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 3226, Room 4202-South, Washington, DC 20250-3226, or call (202) 720-1400. For further information on this notice, please contact the USDA Rural Development State Office in the State in which the applicant's headquarters is located. A list of Rural Development State Office contacts is provided at the following link: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The Agency encourages applications that will support recommendations made in the Rural Prosperity Task Force report to help improve life in rural America, www.usda.gov/ruralprosperity. Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that provide measurable results in helping rural communities build robust and sustainable economies through strategic investments in infrastructure, partnerships, and innovation.

Key strategies include:

- Achieving e-Connectivity for Rural America

- Developing the Rural Economy
- Harnessing Technological Innovation
- Supporting a Rural Workforce
- Improving Quality of Life

Overview

Solicitation Opportunity Type: Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants.

Announcement Type: Initial Solicitation Announcement.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 10.854.

Dates: The deadline for completed applications to be received in the USDA Rural Development State Office no later than 4:30 p.m. (local time) are: First Quarter, September 30, 2020; Second Quarter, December 31, 2020; Third Quarter, March 31, 2021 and Fourth Quarter, June 30, 2021.

Persistent poverty counties:

The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, SEC. 740 designates funding for projects in Persistent Poverty counties. Persistent Poverty counties as defined in SEC. 740 is “any county that has had 20 percent or more of its population living in poverty over the past 30 years, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses, and 2007–2011 American Community Survey five year average, or any territory or possession of the United States”. Another provision in SEC. 740 expands the eligible population in Persistent Poverty counties to include any county seat of such a persistent poverty county that has a population that does not exceed the authorized population limit by more than 10 percent. This provision expands the current 50,000 population limit to 55,000 for only county seats located in Persistent Poverty counties. Therefore, applicants and/or

beneficiaries of technical assistance services located in Persistent Poverty county seats with populations up to 55,000 (per the 2010 Census) are eligible.

A. Program Description

1. Purpose of the Program. The purpose of the program is to promote rural economic development and job creation projects.

2. Statutory Authority. These Programs are authorized under 7 U.S.C. 940c and 7 CFR part 4280, subpart A. Assistance provided to Rural areas, as defined, under this program may include business startup costs, business expansion, business incubators, Technical assistance feasibility studies, Advanced telecommunications services and computer networks for medical, educational, and job training services, and Community Facilities Projects for economic development.

Awards under the REDLG Programs will be made on a competitive basis using specific selection criteria contained in 7 CFR part 4280, subpart A. Information required to be in the application package includes Standard Form (SF) 424, "Application for Federal Assistance;" a Resolution of the Board of Directors; SF LLL, Restrictions on Lobbying; RD 400-1, "Equal Opportunity Agreement;" Assurance Statement for the Uniform Act; Seismic Certification (if construction); and paperwork required in accordance with 7 CFR part 1970, "Environmental Policies and Procedures." If the proposal involves new construction; large increases in employment; hazardous waste; a change in use, size, capacity, purpose, or location from an original facility; or is publicly controversial, the following is required: environmental documentation in accordance with 7 CFR part 1970;" RUS Form 7, "Financial and Statistical Report;" RUS Form 7a, "Investments, Loan Guarantees, and Loans," or similar information; and written narrative

of Project description. Applications will be tentatively scored by the State Offices and submitted to the National Office for review.

3. Definition of Terms. The definitions applicable to this notice are published at 7 CFR 4280.3.

4. Application Awards. The Agency will review, evaluate, and score applications received in response to this notice based on the provisions found in 7 CFR part 4280, subpart A, and as indicated in this notice. However, the Agency advises all interested parties that the applicant bears the burden in preparing and submitting an application in response to this notice whether or not funding is appropriated for these Programs in FY 2021.

B. Federal Award Information

Type of Awards: Loans and Grants.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2021.

Available Funds: Anyone interested in submitting an application for funding under these Programs are encouraged to consult the Rural Development Notices of Solicitation of Applications web site at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/notices-solicitation-applications-nosas>.

Maximum Award: The Agency anticipates the following maximum amounts per award: Loans - \$1,000,000; Grants - \$300,000.

Anticipated Award Dates: First Quarter, November 30, 2020; Second Quarter, February 28, 2021; Third Quarter, May 31, 2021; and Fourth Quarter, August 31, 2021.

Performance Period: October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022.

Renewal or Supplemental Awards: None.

C. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants.

Loans and grants may be made to any entity that is identified by USDA Rural Development as an eligible borrower under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended (Act). In accordance with 7 CFR 4280.13, applicants that are not delinquent on any Federal debt or not otherwise disqualified from participation in these Programs are eligible to apply. An applicant must be eligible under 7 U.S.C. 940c. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any former Rural Utilities Service borrower that has repaid or prepaid an insured, direct, or guaranteed loan under the Act, or any not-for-profit utility that is eligible to receive an insured or direct loan under such Act shall be eligible for assistance under section 313(b)(2)(B) of such Act in the same manner as a borrower under such Act. All other restrictions in this notice will apply.

The Agency requires information to make an eligibility determination through applications that must include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) An original and one copy of Form SF 424, “Application for Federal Assistance (for non-construction);”
- (b) Copies of applicant’s organizational documents showing the applicant’s legal existence and authority to perform the activities under the REDLG Programs;
- (c) A proposed scope of work, including a description of the proposed Project, details of the proposed activities to be accomplished and timeframes for completion of each task, the number of months duration of the Project, and the estimated time it will take from approval to beginning of Project implementation;
- (d) A written narrative that includes, at a minimum, the following items:

(i) An explanation of why the Project is needed, the benefits of the proposed Project, and how the Project meets the Grant eligible purposes, if applicable;

(ii) Area to be served, identifying each governmental unit, i.e., tribe, town, county, etc., to be affected by the Project;

(iii) Description of how the Project will coordinate economic development activities with other economic development activities within the Project area;

(iv) Businesses to be assisted, if appropriate, and economic development to be accomplished;

(v) An explanation of how the proposed Project will result in newly created, increased, or supported jobs in the area and the number of projected new and supported jobs within the next three years;

(vi) A description of the applicant's demonstrated capability and experience in providing the proposed Project assistance, including experience of key staff members and persons who will be providing the proposed Project activities and managing the Project;

(vii) The method and rationale used to select the areas and businesses that will receive the service;

(viii) A brief description of how the work will be performed, including whether organizational staff or consultants or contractors will be used; and

(ix) Other information the Agency may request to assist it in making an award determination.

(e) The last three years of financial information to show the applicant's financial capacity to carry out the proposed work. If the applicant is less than three years

old, at a minimum, the information should include all balance sheet(s), income statement(s), and cash flow statement(s). A current audited report is required if available;

(f) Documentation regarding the availability and amount of other funds to be used in conjunction with the funds from REDLG; and

(g) A budget which includes salaries, fringe benefits, consultant costs, indirect costs, and other appropriate direct costs for the Project.

2. *Cost Sharing or Matching.*

For loans, either the Ultimate Recipient or the Intermediary must provide supplemental funds for the Project equal to at least 20 percent of the loan to the Intermediary. For grants, the Intermediary must establish a Revolving Loan Fund (or Fund) and contribute an amount equal to at least 20 percent of the Grant. The supplemental contribution must come from Intermediary's funds which may not be from other Federal Grants, unless permitted by law.

3. *Other.*

Applications will only be accepted for projects that promote rural economic development and job creation.

There are no "responsiveness" or "threshold" eligibility criteria for these loans and grants. There is no limit on the number of applications an applicant may submit under this announcement.

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative

remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

4. *Completeness Eligibility.*

Applications will not be considered for funding if they do not provide sufficient information to determine eligibility or are missing required elements.

D. Application and Submission Information

1. *Address to Request Application Package.*

For further information, entities wishing to apply for assistance should contact the USDA Rural Development State Office provided in the ADDRESSES section of this notice to obtain copies of the application package.

Prior to official submission of grant applications, applicants may request technical assistance or other application guidance from the Agency, as long as such requests are

made at least 15 days prior to each quarter submission date. Technical assistance is not meant to be an analysis or assessment of the quality of the materials submitted, a substitute for agency review of completed applications, nor a determination of eligibility, if such determination requires in-depth analysis. The Agency will not solicit or consider scoring or eligibility information that is submitted after the application deadline. The Agency reserves the right to contact applicants to seek clarification information on materials contained in the submitted application.

Applications may be submitted in paper or electronic format to appropriate Rural Development State Office and must be received by 4:30 p.m. local time on the deadline date(s). Applicants are encouraged to contact their respective State Office for an email contact to submit an electronic application prior to the submission deadline date(s).

All applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number which can be obtained at no cost via a toll-free request line at (866) 705-5711 or at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. Each applicant applying for grant funds (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from the requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c) or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d) is required to: (i) be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM

requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

Please note that applicants must locate the downloadable application package for this program by the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number or FedGrants Funding Opportunity Number, which can be found at <http://www.grants.gov>.

2. *Content and Form of Application Submission.*

An application must contain all of the required elements. Each selection priority criterion outlined in 7 CFR 4280.42(b) must be addressed in the application. Failure to address any of the criterion will result in a zero-point score for that criterion and will impact the overall evaluation of the application. Copies of 7 CFR part 4280, Subpart A, will be provided to any interested applicant making a request to a Rural Development State Office. An original copy of the application must be filed with the Rural Development State Office for the State where the Intermediary is located.

The applicant documentation and forms needed for a complete application are located in the **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION** section of this notice, and 7 CFR part 4280, Subpart A. There are no specific formats required per this notice, and applicants may request forms and addresses from the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice. Any form that requires an original signature but is signed electronically in the application submission, must be signed in ink by the authorized person prior to the disbursement of funds.

(a) There are no specific limitations on the number of pages or other formatting requirements other than those described in the **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION** section.

(b) There are no specific limitations on the number of pages, font size and type face, margins, paper size, number of copies, and the sequence or assembly requirements.

(c) The component pieces of this application should contain original signatures on the original application.

3. *Submission Dates and Times.*

(a) Application Deadline Dates: No later than 4:30 p.m. (local time) on: First Quarter, September 30, 2020; Second Quarter, December 31, 2020; Third Quarter, March 31, 2021; and Fourth Quarter, June 30, 2021.

Explanation of Dates: Applications must be in the USDA Rural Development State Office by the dates and times as indicated above. If the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, the application is due the next business day.

(b) The deadline date means that the completed application package must be received in the USDA Rural Development State Office by the deadline date and time established above. All application documents identified in this notice are required.

(c) If completed applications are not received by the deadline established above, the application will neither be reviewed nor considered under any circumstances.

(d) The Agency will determine the application receipt date based on the actual date postmarked.

(e) If the grantee has a previously approved indirect cost rate, it is permissible, otherwise, the applicant may elect to charge the 10 percent indirect cost permitted under 2 CFR 200.414(f). Due to the time required to evaluate Indirect Cost Rates, it is likely that all funds will be awarded by the time the Indirect Cost Rate is determined. No foreign travel is permitted. Pre-Federal award costs will only be permitted with prior written approval by the Agency.

(f) Applicants may submit applications in hard copy or electronic format as previously indicated in the **Application and Submission Information** section of this notice. If the applicant wishes to hand deliver its application, the addresses for these deliveries can be located in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

(g) If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

E. Application Review Information

1. Criteria.

All eligible and complete applications will be evaluated and scored based on the selection criteria and weights contained in 7 CFR part 4280, subpart A. Failure to address any one of the criteria by the application deadline will result in the application being determined ineligible, and the application will not be considered for funding.

2. Review and Selection Process.

The State Offices will review applications to determine if they are eligible for assistance based on requirements contained in 7 CFR part 4280, subpart A. If determined eligible, your application will be submitted to the National Office. Funding of projects is

subject to the Intermediary's satisfactory submission of the additional items required by that subpart and the USDA Rural Development Letter of Conditions. The Agency reserves the right to award additional discretionary points under 7 CFR 4280.43.

In order to distribute funds among the greatest number of projects possible, applications will be reviewed, prioritized, and funded by ranking each State's highest scoring Project in highest to lowest score order. The highest scoring Project from each State will be considered that State's Priority One Project. Priority One projects from each State will be ranked by the National Office according to score from highest to lowest. The second highest scoring Project from each State will be considered the State's Priority Two Project and all Priority Two projects will be ranked according to score from highest to lowest and so forth until all projects have been scored and ranked in priority order. All Priority One projects will be funded before any Priority Two projects and so forth until funds are depleted, so as to ensure broad geographic distribution of funding.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

1. *Federal Award Notices.*

Successful applicants will receive notification for funding from the Rural Development State Office. Applicants must comply with all applicable statutes and regulations before the loan/grant award can be approved. Provided the application and eligibility requirements have not changed, an eligible application not selected will be reconsidered in three subsequent quarterly funding competitions for a total of four competitions. If an application is withdrawn, it can be resubmitted and will be evaluated as a new application.

2. *Administrative and National Policy Requirements.*

Additional requirements that apply to intermediaries or grantees selected for these Programs can be found in 7 CFR part 4280, subpart A. Awards are subject to USDA grant regulations at 2 CFR Chapter IV which incorporated the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations 2 CFR 200.

All successful applicants will be notified by letter which will include a Letter of Conditions, and a Letter of Intent to Meet Conditions. This letter is not an authorization to begin performance. If the applicant wishes to consider beginning performance prior to the loan or grant being officially closed, all pre-award costs must be approved in writing and in advance by the Agency. The loan or grant will be considered officially awarded when all conditions in the Letter of Conditions have been met and the Agency obligates the funding for the Project.

Additional requirements that apply to intermediaries or grantees selected for these Programs can be found in 7 CFR 4280, subpart A; the Grants and Agreements regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture codified in 2 CFR 400.1 to 400.2 and 2 CFR part 415 to 422, and successor regulations to these parts.

In addition, all recipients of Federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation (see 2 CFR part 170). You will be required to have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109-282) reporting requirements (see 2 CFR 170.200(b), unless you are exempt under 2 CFR 170.110(b)).

The following additional requirements apply to intermediaries or grantees selected for these Programs:

(a) Form RD 4280-2 “Rural Business-Cooperative Service Financial Assistance Agreement.”

(b) Letter of Conditions.

(c) Form RD 1940-1, “Request for Obligation of Funds.”

(d) Form RD 1942-46, “Letter of Intent to Meet Conditions.”

(e) F LLL, “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,” if applicable.

(f) Use Form SF 270, “Request for Advance or Reimbursement.”

You no longer must complete the following forms for acceptance of a Federal award. This information is now collected through your registration or annual recertification in SAM.gov in the Financial Assistance General Certifications and Representations section:

- Form RD 400-4, “Assurance Agreement.”
- Form AD-3031, “Assurance Regarding Felony Conviction or Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants.”

3. *Reporting.*

(a) A Financial Status Report and a Project performance activity report will be required of all grantees on a quarterly basis until initial funds are expended and yearly thereafter, if applicable, based on the Federal fiscal year. The grantee will complete the Project within the total time available to it in accordance with the Scope of Work and any necessary modifications thereof prepared by the grantee and approved by the Agency. A final Project performance report will be required with the final Financial Status Report. The final report may serve as the last quarterly report. The final report must provide complete information regarding the jobs created and supported as a result of the Grant if

applicable. Grantees must continuously monitor performance to ensure that time schedules are being met, projected work by time periods are being accomplished, and other performance objectives are being achieved. Grantees must submit an original of each report to the Agency no later than 30 days after the end of the quarter. The Project performance reports must include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) A comparison of actual accomplishments to the objectives established for that period;

(2) Problems, delays, or adverse conditions, if any, which have affected or will affect attainment of overall Project objectives, prevent meeting time schedules or objectives, or preclude the attainment of particular Project work elements during established time periods. This disclosure shall be accompanied by a statement of the action taken or planned to resolve the situation; and

(3) Objectives and timetable established for the next reporting period.

(4) Any special reporting requirements, such as jobs supported and created, businesses assisted, or economic development which results in improvements in median household incomes, and any other specific requirements, should be placed in the reporting section of the Letter of Conditions.

(5) Within 90 days after the conclusion of the Project, the Intermediary will provide a final Project evaluation report. The last quarterly payment will be withheld until the final report is received and approved by the Agency. Even though the Intermediary may request reimbursement on a monthly basis, the last 3 months of reimbursements will be withheld until a final report, Project performance, and financial status report are received and approved by the Agency.

(b) In addition to any reports required by 2 CFR part 200 and 2 CFR 400.1 to 400.2 and 2 CFR part 415 to 422, the Intermediary or grantee must provide reports as required by 7 CFR part 4280, subpart A.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

For general questions about this announcement, please contact your USDA Rural Development State Office provided in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

H. Civil Rights Requirements

All grants made under this notice are subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as required by the USDA (7 CFR part 15, subpart A) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title IX, Executive Order 13166 (Limited English Proficiency), Executive Order 11246, and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974.

I. Other Information

Paperwork Reduction Act

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the information collection requirement contained in this notice is approved by OMB under OMB Control Number 0570-0070.

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

All applicants, in accordance with 2 CFR part 25, must have a DUNS number, which can be obtained at no cost via a toll-free request line at (866) 705-5711 or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. Similarly, all applicants applying for grant funds must be registered in SAM prior to submitting an application. Applicants may register for the

SAM at <http://www.sam.gov/SAM>. All recipients of Federal financial grant assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive total compensation in accordance with 2 CFR part 170.

Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA Programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the

form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue SW,
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) email: program.intake@usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Rebecka Adcock,

Administrator,

Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

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